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Joint Note for the press WHO/FAO N°15  
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## **CODEX URGED TO SPEED UP WORK AND INCREASE PARTICIPATION BY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

### **27<sup>th</sup> Session set to address infant formula Code, improve food chain safety and good animal feeding practices**

**Geneva** - The Codex Alimentarius Commission convened its 27<sup>th</sup> session today, one year ahead of schedule, amid calls for the Commission to implement recommendations made by a Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) evaluation. Codex is an international food standards-setting body established by FAO and WHO.

The Commission, which traditionally met once every two years, will now meet yearly in response to the joint evaluation, which called on Codex to speed up its work and adapt to the ever-increasing demands of member countries.

In 2003, the World Health Assembly called on Codex to become more effective at managing health risks in food. And now, as food safety issues are increasingly seen in a context that runs from the farm to the consumer's table, FAO and WHO have urged the Codex Commission to seek additional ways to address risks throughout the food chain. In response, the Codex Commission is set to approve a Code of Practice on Good Animal Feeding that would establish a feed safety system for food producing animals. It would take into account relevant aspects of animal health and the environment in order to minimize risks to the health of consumers.

The Codex Commission is also expected to formally approve work to revise the 23-year-old Recommended International Code of Practice for Foods for Infants and Children. The revision will particularly take into account issues related to contamination by *Enterobacter sakazakii* in infant formula.

The Commission will also consider re-establishing the *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology. The aim is to keep up with the fast-changing applications of gene technologies and the increasing interest of consumers in the potential health impact of genetically modified foods.

Setting international food standards requires the participation by all countries, including developing ones. Since March 2004, the FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund has supported the participation of nine countries in Codex technical committee meetings and more than 30 countries have been funded to attend the present session of the Codex Commission.

"Improving members' involvement in the Codex decision-making process is not just a matter of travelling to meetings. Participation must also be effective, in other words, based on strengthened

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capacities at the national level to establish and administer food control systems," said Mr. Hartwig de Haen, FAO Assistant Director-General.

FAO and WHO technical assistance programmes support the efforts of developing countries to strengthen their national food safety systems to protect local consumers and to take advantage of international food trade opportunities.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission has 170 member countries, all of which are members of FAO or WHO or both. The European Community is also a Codex member organization. The main work on standard setting is carried out in the more than 20 Codex Committees and Task Forces. The Codex Commission adopts the standards proposed by these Committees and Task Forces and sets the Commission's future work plan.

Mr. Kazuaki Miyagishima, who is organizing his first Codex Commission session as Secretary, said: "We seek to ensure that Codex as an institution continues to improve its means of addressing its dual objective: protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in food trade by providing science-based food quality and safety standards, guidelines and recommendations."

The 27<sup>th</sup> session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission runs from 28 June to 3 July. The meeting is taking place at Geneva's International Conference Centre (CICG) and is open to journalists.

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